



# State of Utah

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## NEWS RELEASE

September 3, 2004

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### GOVERNOR WALKER TO SUPPORT PROGRAM TO AID SOUTHERN UTAH FORESTS AND COMMUNITIES

Governor Olene Walker will sign a Memorandum of Understanding between the USDA Forest Service and the State of Utah to create a Forest Restoration Partnership Working Group. The signing will take place in the governor's boardroom on September 10, 2004, at 1:00 p.m.

The Forest Restoration Partnership Working Group will be charged with monitoring and guiding programs that will benefit forests and communities of the Central Colorado Plateau and Great Basin. Using a collaborative approach, the group members will seek innovative methods for conducting and implementing forest restoration programs, and use local employment preference as a selection criteria for contracting.

"We see this as an important step in accomplishing much needed forest restoration work," said State Forester Joel Frandsen. "It will not only benefit our forests, but the economies of local communities."

The Working Group will be comprised of eight members: the Forest Service Supervisors of the Dixie, Fishlake and Kaibab National Forests; the Utah State Forester; the Utah Rural Development Council Director; a commissioner from the Five Counties Association of Government (AOG) service area; a commissioner from the Six County AOG service area; and one member from the Arizona Strip Alliance.

"The creation of this group will encourage a beneficial working relationship between the Forest Service and the rural communities surrounding National Forests in southern Utah," says Jack Troyer, Intermountain Regional Forester. "I am pleased that the Forest Service can enter into this agreement with the citizens of Utah. It is an outstanding opportunity to jointly identify and prioritize healthy forest restoration needs."

The Forest Restoration Partnership Working Group is expected to convene their first meeting within forty-five days of the signing of the memorandum. It is expected that a Stewardship Center will be created using Forest Service funds in the short-term and the partners will contribute equal amounts of in-kind resources to maintain and carry out the responsibilities of the Working Group.

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